

80-1059

21 April 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Publications Review Board

STATINTL THROUGH : [REDACTED] PB/NSC Coordinator
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

STATINTL FROM : [REDACTED]
PB/NSC Coordination Staff

SUBJECT : Request to Submit Article for Publication

STATINTL 1. I request permission to submit for publication the attached book review.

2. When approved, I intend to submit the review for publication in [REDACTED] magazine.

3. None of the material presented in the review is, to my knowledge, classified.

4. I am not under cover. But I will not be identified as an Agency employee since the magazine prefers to identify all government officials who contribute to it only as to their place of residence.

STATINTL

Attachment:
As stated

SUBJECT: Request to Submit Article for Publication

STATINTL

AUTHOR'S NAME:

TITLE OF PUBLICATION: Book Review

I have reviewed the attached article, to the best to my knowledge have found it to be unclassified, and approve it for publication.

STATINTL

4/21/80
Date

Deputy Director, NFAC

Date

The Fall of South Vietnam, by Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Keller, and Brian M. Jenkins. New York: Crane, Russak and Co., 1980. 267 pps. \$14.50

This book reports what twenty-seven high-ranking South Vietnamese officials thought about the political and military trends and developments that led to the collapse of Saigon. It also captures their reactions to the way the situation unraveled between January and April of 1975. The main body of the text is preceded by a succinct summary of the major themes and findings, and the volume itself is extremely well organized and written.

The study was undertaken by the Rand Corporation for the Office of the Secretary of Defense "to elicit from these men their personal recollections of what they had seen and done during the critical period and what they perceived as the principal causes of the suddenness of the collapse--and to do this before memories dimmed and mythology set in." The Rand team succeeded admirably and has published a book that vividly re-creates the atmosphere and deeply held feelings that pervaded the times and surrounded key events.

As someone who had just completed a series of interviews about future prospects in Saigon in January of 1975, and who then re-lived the events of April with a number of close Vietnamese friends who had made their way to Washington, the extracts from the Rand interviews struck me as an accurate representation of the views of most Saigon government officials. A number of key facets to the Vietnamese political landscape are not represented, especially the views of those political leaders who were not only anti-Thieu (as many in the book seem to be) but also anti-American and anti-war. But the authors properly acknowledge the limits of their sample.

The book also has a meaning and significance far beyond "instant history." The context in which it must be read, as the authors make clear at the outset, is that of the failure of the overall US-Vietnamese relationship. Illustrated here are 27 views of an American presence that was arrogant, misguided, culturally and historically ill-informed, and rarely skillful in dealing with Vietnamese sensitivities on a governmental or personal level.

The authors have contributed an intimate and revealing portrait not only of the Vietnamese but also of how we were perceived in Vietnam. Equally important, the book points up difficulties that seem inherent in maintaining an alliance between a small state and a great power. It should, therefore, appeal to a broader audience than those interested in re-living the fall of Saigon.

A personal note: While the book confirmed many of my views about how we were perceived by the Vietnamese, it also contained a few shockers. Despite the cynicism of the Vietnamese (about the US, the war, and the future), I was impressed to discover the deep and abiding faith they

apparently had that the US would not allow Saigon to fall to the Communists. So when one of the Rand interviewers asked: "When did this belief start to erode?", I sat bolt upright when I read the reply: "The last day." The book contributed a new appreciation on my part for how deep the tragedy of our war in Vietnam was to those who survived it.



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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Book Review

FROM:

PB/NSC Coordination Staff
7E-23 Hqs.

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

21 April 1980

STAT OTHER

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and

DATE

OFFICER'S
INITIALSCOMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom
to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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✓ PB/NSC files

E. Hineman
DD/NFACPublications Review Board
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